

Advent reflection Week 1
Week of First Sunday in Advent – 29th November 2020

Opening prayer

Come Holy Spirit
And open us to the treasures of God's word.
Grant us a readiness to listen
and an openness to learn;
so that we can be alert to your presence
at this time of waiting
and ready to respond to
your call to us.
Amen.

Read through once quietly and slowly.

Gospel reading: Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples:

Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Sit for a moment as it percolates

Reflection questions:

- What words stood out for you in today's reading?
- How do you respond to the idea that we don't know when Jesus will return? Is that positive or negative?
- Who are the servants of the Gospel and what are they expected to do?
- How do you respond to the idea that God has left each of us with a responsibility and task for building the Kingdom of God?
- If we're not sure what it is how do we find out?
- What else comes up for you here?

REFLECTION:

Waiting is the hardest thing to do because it feels like you're not doing anything, and it seems twice as hard when we're young. When we're children, Christmas always seems a long time away and we think the end of school holidays or birthdays will never arrive.

And we in this 21st-century certainly have an ever-shrinking attention span; our wealth and technology allow us to access virtually anything we want any time we want. Everything is sooner, faster, now at the click of a button. And it seems we do like that speed, especially technological speed. So if anyone needs to learn the Advent virtue of waiting upon the Lord, maybe it's us.

And so, if we want to be with Mary in her journey towards the birth of Jesus, we need to settle and be patient. We're going to take the 4 weeks of advent to wait and prepare spiritually and reflect what it's like to wait for God.

Of course, virtually this entire year has been a time of waiting for us. We've waited during lockdowns and quarantines. We've waited on masks and respirators and toilet paper! We've waited on test results for the coronavirus, wondering whether we are positive or not. We've waited endless weeks and months, not able to visit our loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes, in order to protect them. We've waited on the kids going back to school and waited to see if people's jobs would hold out during the pandemic. We've waited for furlough and we have waited for a vaccine. And we've also waited to go back to church in the old ways that were familiar and comfortable to us.

2020 seems to have been nothing but a year of waiting. Perhaps we are better equipped now than ever to understand the Good News that God is working with us as we wait for the birth of His Son Jesus.

And we're actually doing two kinds of spiritual waiting right now. We're waiting for the coming of the Christ Child when we celebrate Jesus' arrival on Christmas Day, that glorious moment when God comes to be with us in human form.

But we're also waiting for the signs of birth and new life in our own lives. We're waiting to see the new and next way that God will be manifest in our own individual time and place. God is with us, but do we see where and how? Maybe that's how we keep company with Mary: being aware and watchful – always being on the lookout for a new revelation waiting to be discovered among the everyday aspects of our lives.

Patience is a hard-earned virtue, and many of us are deeply wearied by all the waiting we've had to do, all the times we've had to say no to ourselves and families and friends this year in order to stay safe and keep others safe. It might feel like 2020 is a year out of time, a wasted and empty expanse that consisted of nothing but life on hold. But is that really true? Has this time of waiting really been wasted?

As you reflect on your waiting this year, what has gone on for you and what has God grown in you? What has been blossoming in your heart during this time of waiting?

What new things are being born in our community after having been forced to slow down? What has been most important about your faith and the wider community that you might like to see continue or develop?

What task is God inviting you to?

(Reflection written by Ann Smith, St Martin's parish Tranent)

Intercessory prayers:

- Be with us as we try to hear you in our lives, not just this week but as we look back through the pandemic
Lord hear us
- We pray for our community in Our Lady of Loretto as we enter Advent, that we can travel together spiritually as community even if we can't be physically together.
- Lord hear us
- We pray for all who have been affected by Covid-19 this year, in any way.
Be with them God in their suffering
- Lord hear us

Add in any other prayers you would like to include and then end with:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning
is now and ever shall be
World without end
Amen